

**NEWS NASA**

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20546

TELS. WO 2-4155  
WO 3-6925

**FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE**

1:00 p.m. EDT, 24 April 1967

**RUSSIAN ACCIDENT  
STATEMENT**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**JAMES E. WEBB, Administrator, National Aeronautics &  
Space Administration.**

WEBB: Good afternoon, gentlemen, I would like to start by saying that a telegram has been sent by the 47 astronauts who are engaged in NASA's space activities to the National Academy of Sciences expressing their sadness at the loss of Colonel Komarov, expressing their feeling of comradeship for him as a fellow test pilot engaged in a hazardous undertaking, a pioneering undertaking, and expressing their deep sense of sympathy to Mrs. Komarov, her children, and the fellow cosmonauts, also.

For those of you who have seen the statement which I issued a short time ago, I would like to say that Mr. Scheer tells me some are interested in how I can be so sure that President Johnson is ready to act to achieve effective cooperation, and I thought, therefore, I would like to read you a few words that he said to the United States Senate on February 7 of this year, when he transmitted the first treaty on outer space to the Senate with his request for its consent to ratification.

On that occasion, President Johnson stated that in November, 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had asked him to appear before the United Nations to present a resolution urging that the exploration of outer space be undertaken for peaceful purposes as an enterprise of international cooperation among all member nations, and the President quoted from his own words of 9 years before, that is in 1958, and these were President Johnson's words to the United Nations in 1958. "Today outer space is free. It is unscarred by conflict. No nation holds a concession there. It must remain this way. We of the United States do not acknowledge that there are landlords of outer space who can presume to bargain with the nations of the earth on the price for access of this domain. We must not and we need not corrupt this great opportunity and bring to it the very antagonism which we may by courage overcome and leave behind forever if we proceed with this joint adventure into this new realm," and Mr. Johnson went on to use these words:

"We know, the gains of cooperation. We know the losses of the failure to cooperate. If we fail now to apply the lessons we have learned or even if we delay this application, we know that the advances into space

may only mean adding a new dimension to warfare. If, however, we proceed along the orderly course of full cooperation, we shall by the very fact of cooperation make the most substantial contribution toward perfecting peace," and then he added this prophetic phrase, "Men who have worked together to reach the stars are not likely to descend together into the depths of war and desolation."

My own statement, gentlemen, is this: All of us who have faced the difficulties of understanding and putting to use the forces of nature at the outer edge of Man's knowledge of what is possible in this decade deeply regret the loss of life represented by the death of Cosmomaut Komarov, and extend our sincere sympathy to this family and associates. We feel certain that man will achieve great things in space. Some of these will determine what the men will be able to do on earth.

We also feel that at this dawn of the space age, man has the duty to seek cooperation between nations, such as the USSR and the United States on a realistic basis.

We at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration want to make every realistic effort. Could the lives already lost have been saved if we had known each other's hopes, aspirations and plans? Or could they have been saved if full cooperation had been the order of the day?

Both the USSR and the United States are developing very large space capabilities. We both will have to decide between many courses of action which each will have the power to carry out. I have much hope that the dramatic events which have already occurred in 1967 will be looked at against the background of the many statements made by the leaders of both nations to the effect that cooperation is something both nations should seek.

I know President Johnson is ready to match his actions with his strongly expressed desire for more effective cooperation.

HACKES: Mr. Webb, could you be a little less cryptic about this cooperative effort and expand a little bit on your question about if full cooperation had been the order of the day could the lives have been saved --

WEBB: Mr. Hackes, I think it has been made clear that we have a very large effort to overcome the many difficulties involved in using the power -- rough power of the atom bomb to bomb men off the surface of the earth, and speed them up so they can operate over long periods and long distances in space.

Now, this requires a great deal of information, testing and experimentation. I do not know whether there may have been something in the USSR that may have alerted us and made us think and act differently with respect to the problems that we encountered at the Cape, when Grissom, Chaffee and White lost their lives. I will only point out that it only took 4 ounces of combustibile in that spacecraft to cause the fire that lost these men's lives.

Also, I have no way of knowing that we, with the success we have had in the recovery of Gemini may have had some information to contribute to the failure of the Russian spacecraft to re-enter successfully, and have a recovery system that would have saved this cosmonaut's life, but the point is we are both struggling with the same difficult problems of understanding the laws of nature, the re-entry physics problem, and the control of energy where there is no air or water for a propeller to push against, where you actually have to use little squirts of energy under very carefull control to accomplish what you want to accomplish.

Then I have in mind that both of us are moving toward large spacecraft, separating them in space, having an ability to overcome difficulties encountered in the joining or separation, and I can only say that we were extremely fortunate when with our spacecraft, I think it was Gemini VI or VII, was it, that encountered the difficulty, and had to land 500 miles off Japan.

Now, this was an emergency. We were able to overcome the problems of that emergency and bring that spacecraft down, and I do think that the large requirement for knowledge, information, know-how, and technical information can contribute in a cooperative effort if people will be willing to talk about their plans and be willing to match the things that we can do together to the plans.

The problem of cooperation is accentuated when you don't know what the other fellows plans are.

QUESTION: Mr. Webb, both countries now have major losses in their space program. How does this affect the race for the moon?

WEBB: Well, I am not too anxious to talk about this in terms of a race to the moon. I think that we both have the same problem of nature to overcome, whenever we encounter difficulty, each of us has to stop, find out the cause of it, fix it before you can move ahead.

Now, I do not know just exactly what the problems are that they have had. I do feel that in our own case, the fact that we did things together means that we are going to be making up a lot of time that may have been lost otherwise.

First, we have disassembled the burned spacecraft with an unburned one and matched knowledge of those things flowing into our future operations, will come from that. Second, we have had a large number of tests, something like a hundred, within the boilerplate of the spacecraft, so we will know what starts fire and how to save men even if you have a fire.

Now, this knowledge probably would not have been accumulated without a driving impetus to do it.

QUESTION: Well, would you say that one accident cancels out the other, that we were about where we were before?

WEBB: No, sir, I would not. I would say what we already know about the capability of nation's to

develop technological power for many different uses is accentuated by what has happened, and that both nations will find themselves in a position where if they cannot find a realistic basis of cooperation, both will be compelled to go forward, because the power loss of abandoning this field would be so great, and because the opportunities for the future are also so great.

Yes?

QUESTION: Mr. Webb, specifically, do you think it would be practical for the United States and Russia to cooperate together?

WEBB: Yes, I think it would. If they are prepared to talk about their plans, and discuss ways and means through which we could work together to meet their plans and ours. As long as they are not willing to talk about their plans and not prepared to look together at what could be accomplished, I do not think there is a very realistic basis for cooperation in that way.

I would like to point out, though, that Surveyors digging a trench on the moon and sending back this information tells them something about the moon, just as their Lunar 9's landing on the moon told us something that something could land there, and made a penetration of the surface.

So we both are learning from what the other does. We could learn more if we could identify specific information needed, and compare our information with theirs. We might find that both our information is wrong. We might find from a comparison that both of us are wrong, and then we might hit the right thing.

QUESTION: Are you suggesting the exchange of technological information, or would you prefer to see an actual physical joining of the two efforts together?

WEBB: Well, again, this is too wide an area of speculation for me at this time. What I am saying is if there is a desire to cooperate, if people will begin to talk about their plans, their hopes, and aspirations, what they would like to do, then you can begin talk about

how to go forward to do it.

I am not much interested, and I don't think it is realistic to talk about technological interchange in this sort of thing. You first have to get on a basis where you know what they want to do, and they know the same about us, and we begin to ask ourselves how can we both gain from working together, find a small part for cooperation and work to enlarge it.

But to join the efforts is too grandiose here. You have got to join the desires first.

QUESTION: Mr. Webb, did you discuss this action with the President? Did he encourage you to go ahead and make this approach?

WEBB: No, I have not. I have known the President for a very long period of time, though, and do understand, going back to 1958, those words I read you, that he has felt strongly that we ought to be able to find a way to cooperate, that he has held out on every occasion that he had the opportunity to -- so the fact that he was ready to cooperate -- so I have made the statement on my own from my knowledge, long-standing knowledge of what he hopes and believes.

He is in Germany now, so I didn't have the opportunity?

I would say that we both have had and will have emergencies, and that each flight has some element of extreme risk, and I am not prepared to comment on the exact things that they encountered beyond what they have announced. So if they have an announcement about any difficulties, then I will accept that for the time being.

QUESTION: (unintelligible)

WEBB: I don't want to comment on that. The plan fact is that when you are going to operate in space, you can't have an engine dragging through the water

or across the land, or through the air. You have got to use a massive amount of energy to go up above the air, and speed up to have high speeds under close control. This is the requirement, and then you have to be able to get where you want to do and do the job you want to do. Then you have to get back, the re-entry problem and the landing.

All are necessary, all are difficult and if you are having trouble with one or the other of them, I would doubt that anyone could classify now which one would delay you the most. You have got to do all three things successfully to do work in space.

QUESTION: Mr. Webb, do you think that there was any difficulty other than the parachute failure?

WEBB: I prefer not to comment on that until a little more time has passed. I prefer to wait in this instance.

QUESTION: (unintelligible)

WEBB: No, we do not monitor these flights. The United States government has other means through which it obtains this kind of information, which NASA uses, as a part of the United States government.

QUESTION: (unintelligible)

WEBB: Well, I wish he hadn't said that, and I think he is quite premature, If he said that. I have not seen that. I think the situation is this. We have had a major and tragic accident.

We have, I think, performed the largest and most complex job of investigating the cause of it, and how to learn the cause of it ever done. No investigation ever done by this country has approached this in detail, and thoroughness, and amount of effort in connection with what we have done.

Now we are going through, within our own organization and with our contractors, all of the things necessary to agree on a course of action and to determine the time required to carry it out, and we are going



back before the Congress, the House and the Senate, to tell them what we are prepared to do. I have announced very carefully, and have stated to both the House and the Senate that we would not implement the plan until we had given it to them, and they had an opportunity to respond to it and to give us any advice, and I would like to have their advice, because I would like to be sure that if we have overlooked something important, as they sometimes seem to think we do, we can have their advice as to how to overcome it in the beginning,

And so, right now, we are going back before the House and the Senate to give them the full benefit of what we have done since the Board reported, and seek their advice, and I think it would be premature to assume that we or they know what the end result of that process will be.

I believe in the process, and I believe that process will give us a good course of action.

My own view is that we have some chance, maybe a reasonable chance, to do all the work necessary after we have made the first flight with the Block 2 to accomplish a lunar landing in this decade, but this depends on flying these two Saturn V flights this year, and testing the heat shield on the Apollo, and determining that it works, and then following with the Apollo Block 2 spacecraft flights.

In the meantime, I would like to point out that we have an unmanned Lunar Excursion Module, unmanned this year, and if all of those work right, and the Apollo Block 2 does, then I think we have got an open road ahead of us to develop all we need to know to make the lunar attempt.

All right, gentlemen.

(Whereupon, at 1:25 p.m., the news conference was concluded.)